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TERMINOLOGY AND THE SOCIOLOGICAL CONFERENCE.

In the ANNALS for September, 1894, appeared a paper by Mr. I. W. Howerth, on the "Present Condition of Sociology in the United States." The result of this writer's extended and careful inquiry was to show "the chaotic condition of sociological thought." Much of recent discussion has had a similar result, leaving the impression upon the public at least that there was little agreement among sociologists as to the nature or even the field of their science. Thus Mr. Spencer defines sociology as "the science of society," and gives as a reason for adopting the term that "no other name sufficiently comprehensive existed." By inference, therefore, we may assume that he intended the word to mean a *comprehensive* science of society. This definition is accepted by Ward and De Greef, and with slight variations by other writers. Recently, however, the propriety of this definition has been sharply questioned. With Small the departure is apparent. "Sociology is the synthesis of all the particular social sciences," but "not a substitute" for them, nor does it strictly include them. "Sociology is subsequent to all these sciences and dependent upon them." The difference is obvious. Economics, politics, etc., are not parts of sociology, but separate sciences, each cultivating a field within which sociology cannot trespass. But when they have raised their different crops of conclusions a new science, sociology, subjects these conclusions to a subsequent combining process by which alone they can be transformed into "a body of wisdom available as a basis of deliberate social procedure." The agricultural simile is not intended as a caricature. The writer himself says that sociology uses social facts "as the raw material of social ideals."

Still a third and apparently very different view of sociology is vigorously championed by Professor Giddings. He objects to De Greef's classification as one of "the all comprehending schemes" which "includes everything, from the husbanding of corn and wine to electioneering contests in the Institute of France." Such a conception not only requires the sociologist to be "either omniscient or superficial," but it "disintegrates his science." Sociology is "defined as the science of social elements and first principles. It is not the inclusive but the fundamental social science." And farther, in apparent contradiction with the preceding definition, "the special social sciences *rest on* sociology." These are but fragments of his keen and vigorous indictment of former classifications.

It is not strange that these striking differences of opinion should have deeply impressed the popular mind. The desirability of removing both this impression and the fact that caused it led to a conference recently in New York,* at which prominent representatives of all shades of opinion were present, including the American writers already mentioned. Sociology was there defined as the "inclusive," the "co-ordinating" and the "fundamental" social science, with all the diversity which previous utterances had led us to expect. The final result of the discussion, however, was to the minds of those present so important, that it seems desirable to give it, if possible, a more permanent and effective form. While I write with this end in view, I do not, of course, assume to speak authoritatively for the conference, nor shall I maintain even the form of report, except so far as suits my purpose. I merely give my own view of the question discussed, a view which I understand to be in substantial agreement with the conclusion reached by the conference. That conclusion was that the three unreconciled conceptions of sociology before mentioned are reconcilable and at the bottom identical.

* December 28, 1894. See below p. 139.

In the first place, only a moment's reflection is needed to show that a "co-ordinating" and a "fundamental" social science are one and the same thing. How are the various sciences which deal with society to be correlated? We are past the day when this correlation can be accomplished by the bookbinder or the printer. To bind in one volume, with the name, social science, treatises on economics, politics, etc., with possibly the prefatory remark that they all concern man in his relations with other men, produces much the same organic result as that of the daily paper which prints in adjacent columns accounts of a sermon, a reception and a prize fight under the heading, social events. Of course, no sociologist of the slightest repute has ever sanctioned this mere bundling together of distinct sciences under the name of sociology, and objections to such a process are mere attacks upon a man of straw. But it has not always been clear how the social sciences were correlated. There is plainly but one way which can have any scientific significance. If the social sciences are correlated, it must be by the possession of certain principles that are common to them all. If there are any laws which govern men in all their associations, in the factory, the household, the church, etc., these laws must certainly be regarded as fundamental. Furthermore, it is plain that the discovery and formulation of these laws will disclose the relations which subsist between those different sciences which deal with different classes of social phenomena. It is not clear that these sciences can be related in any other way than by a common dependence on fundamental and universal principles. It would be idle to insist on a truth so obvious had not differences of form and emphasis left the impression of disharmony, which it is to be hoped that future usage will avoid.

This difference is most apparent in the allied question, Is sociology "subsequent to" and "dependent upon" the other social sciences, or do they "rest on sociology?" Both statements are true, as their authors readily admit, while

emphasizing them differently. Sociology is logically precedent and chronologically subsequent to the differentiated social sciences. The universal laws governing human association are necessarily "the postulates" of the differentiated social sciences, and the latter "rest on" the former, but historically these sciences have preceded and must precede sociology. How do we know that a law is universal if not by comparing the results of many local observations? The special sciences furnish to the general science its data, receiving from the latter their postulates in exchange. The dependence is, of course, mutual, and should be so recognized.

We have remaining two conceptions of sociology which are apparently more distinct. The "comprehensive social science" includes the special sciences; the "science of social elements and first principles" emphatically excludes them. It is perhaps too much to say that these two conceptions are identical, but it can be clearly shown that the difference has less importance than recent discussions have seemed to give it, there being substantial agreement as to the real relations involved and the wisest course to be pursued by both investigator and teacher.

Let us notice the agreement as to facts before we discuss the question of terminology. Everyone admits that there are certain general laws governing the association of men in groups of every kind, and profoundly influencing the character of these groups, even in their remotest details. These are comparable to gravitation, chemical affinity, etc., and their formulation is, conceivably at least, a definite and useful task. On the other hand, no one will claim that these simple generalizations supply all needed knowledge of society, or exhaust the field of scientific inquiry. These general laws must be studied in their secondary or special phases, which are local in their manifestation. This gives rise to certain other definite and presumably profitable tasks, the achievements in which constitute the well-known special social

sciences. Though logically secondary, they have developed historically first, on the principle so admirably formulated by Simmel that "the simplest results of thinking are not the results of the simplest thinking." As to the relation of these secondary sciences to the primary science, there is not the slightest disagreement. They are *branches*.^{*} It is only a question whether they are branches *of* sociology or branches *from* sociology. When men agree upon facts, and know that they agree on them, questions of terminology usually lose their interest, but until we have a more discriminating public to deal with, these questions will never wholly lose their importance.

Without attaching much importance to metaphor, it may be useful to make a larger application of the one last used. A tree has branches. They are dependent on the general life of the tree, and their general character is determined by it. Nevertheless, they have an individual identity and local peculiarities. Is the tree merely a bundle of branches? By no means; it has root and trunk, without which there would be no branches. In the case of our particular tree we are all agreed except as to the name. We have names for the branches and one name to spare—an excellent name, which we can apply either to the trunk or to the whole tree. Some say the branches are parts of the tree and others say they are not, all of which is obviously only a question of words, or rather of a single word; and even here the dispute seems to produce no confusion of ideas as to the facts.

This last point is the very question at issue, and it behooves us to be sure. If the double use of the term has bred confusion, it will appear in the treatises on the subject. The most prominent of these are those of Spencer and Ward, both large works and based on the idea that sociology is the

^{*}I am, of course, speaking of economics, politics, etc., in the ordinary sense. If these terms are used in an extraordinary sense, nothing which has been said here or heretofore may find intelligible application to the new concepts which these familiar terms are made to stand for. This is at least an objection to needless innovations in accepted terminology.

comprehensive social science. Here, if anywhere, we should expect to find the special sciences actually incorporated into sociology. But this is far from the case. Spencer and Ward have never been counted as economists in anything but the most general way, though their claim to a high rank as sociologists is beyond dispute. Ward has been criticised for introducing matter too fundamental, *i. e.*, his monistic philosophy, but never, so far as I know, for going too much into special lines. Objection may be taken to their conclusions, but it can hardly be said that they have abused their inclusive definition in practice. The reason is obvious. Too great attention to the branches would have defeated their purpose, and any man who has the ability for broad generalization may be trusted to appreciate that fact. That Spencer has had the same working conception of sociology as his critics was not only freely admitted by all at the conference, but has been admitted by them before. Says Professor Giddings: "Sociology is a general science, but a general science is not necessarily a group of sciences" (to which Spencer would assent in theory and practice). "No doubt the word will continue to be used as a short term for the social sciences collectively, and there is no harm in that. Again, in a synthetic philosophy like that of Mr. Spencer's, it can always be used legitimately to denote an explanation of social evolution in broad outlines of abstract truth." It is plain, therefore, that Professor Giddings both fairly appreciates and justifies Mr. Spencer's use of the term and his development of the subject of sociology. How comes it, then, that his carefully weighed statements have produced such an exaggerated contrary impression? I will venture an explanation based partly on his statements and partly on my own speculations.

Spencer has not defined sociology as a mere group of special sciences or treated it as such, but he has been so interpreted. This is the more possible, because more than almost any other man he has been talked about by men who

never read him. To him the science of society was a tree with many branches. He called the tree sociology and as a sociologist considered mainly the trunk, leaving the branches to specialists in the study of their individual characters. The public has gotten from Spencer's sociology little but the name and has applied that to the bundle of branches, because that was all it knew about the tree. The priority of local investigation made this inevitable, but it was unfortunate for the progress of the science. The specialist who "straddled" over two or three branches was deemed a sociologist, which he was not in the Spencerian or any other sense. Fundamentals were neglected in the effort of the teacher to enlarge his repertoire. Doubtless, some real sociology came of this, but only incidentally and as it were unconsciously. To this objection from the standpoint of science was added another from the standpoint of pedagogics. The university which has instruction in the various social sciences has no room for a chair of sociology in this pseudo-sense. Without academic recognition sociology can make little progress. It must not be forgotten that this pseudo-science never had the sanction of any reputable sociologist, but it gained credence and was an ugly fact to be reckoned with.

Against this conception Professor Giddings has properly protested. To the minds of some his protest has in turn been liable to misinterpretation. He has seemed to over-emphasize the separateness of sociology from economics, etc., even to the extent of making it a co-ordinate science. Again, he has seemed at times to hold Spencer and others responsible for all the misinterpretations to which their writings gave rise, thus producing the impression to which reference was made at the outset, that sociologists were not agreed as to the very subject of their science, an impression which was not only incorrect as we have seen, but in turn prejudicial to the science. But it is hard to perfectly apportion one's emphasis or foresee all the misinterpretations which

will arise, and Professor Giddings deserves the fullest recognition for his services in rescuing sociology from the "straddlers," in insisting that the tree was more than the sum of the branches and that this *more* was the very thing that gave sociology its reason for existence. This service is none the less real because the false conception was not chargeable to any prominent representative of the science.

I am, of course, aware that the relations here discussed are not so simple as I have seemed to make them. I fully concur in the acute suggestion of Professor J. B. Clark, that in all applications of the tree and branch figure the tree should be a banyan tree. The special social sciences do not deal exclusively with the phenomena of human association. Economics, for instance, receives postulates from psychology and the physical sciences as well as from sociology. As a partially independent science it may even give postulates in turn to sociology, thus reversing the order of dependence. Frequently, too, there is a difference of perspective, as when the economist studies association as a factor in the development of wealth, while the sociologist is studying wealth as a factor in the development of society. It may be urged against every classification that it artificially simplifies and, in so far, misstates the real relations involved. But this does not invalidate the classification. The question is, does it isolate and emphasize the *most important* relations of dependence? It seems to be generally agreed that the laws of association are the principal postulates of the special "social" sciences if we may judge by the name applied to the group.

I have tried to show that the real working conception of sociology has been much the same with all who have attained recognition as sociologists, misconceptions having rested with outsiders whose important relation as patrons and sympathizers has warranted the discussion. The question whether the special sciences are a part of sociology is important only in so far as it influences the *practical* relations of

those sciences. I have no fear that any one who makes serious advances in the study of fundamental sociology will be a trespasser in special fields, or that anyone who confines himself to special fields will be recognized as a sociologist. I, therefore, hope that not much more time will be spent in discussing this question of inclusion. But in a paper like this the subject perhaps deserves mention. There are arguments, none of them very important, on both sides.

In favor of calling the special sciences branches of sociology may be urged, first, the etymology of the word which suggests a science co-extensive with society or the phenomena of human association. We must never be slaves to etymology and where the etymology is concealed or usage has set it aside, it should be unhesitatingly ignored. But here etymology is exceedingly evident and all usage is so far in its favor. It is almost certain to influence usage which is only partly under scientific control. There is a constant interplay in the popular mind between all the derivatives of this root which may well make us despair of giving to one of them a narrow and exclusive meaning.

Farther, there is need of an inclusive term and with Spencer we must confess that we know of no other which has any chance of adoption. Social science has been proposed, thus freeing sociology for the narrower use. But the fate of "natural science" in competition with biology is not encouraging. Though backed up by extensive usage its inherent unsatisfactoriness ruled it out and biology has been substituted, it must be confessed with general satisfaction. Moreover, "social science" has been thoroughly spoiled by bad usage.

Finally, the inclusion emphasizes a real connection and mutual dependence which is eventually more important than dangerous.

Against this inclusive use of the term there is first of all, "the pressure of the academic situation," the influence of which, upon the present discussion, was frankly recognized

at the conference. Just now sociology is being examined by boards of trustees. Has it a field of its own which will warrant the creation of a separate chair? Other scientists are watching for poachers upon their preserves. As one economist puts it: "The sociologist has no business in the field without the economist's consent." It is a time for diplomacy, a time to insist that sociology is not economics or politics *at all*. These considerations are temporarily important but, let us hope, only temporarily so. They should not make us nervous or drive us into a position from which the indefinitely more powerful laws of language growth will ultimately force us to recede. Moreover, the greatest sociologists have hitherto not been teachers and the same may be true in the future. For them at least, this academic nervousness is meaningless and they are not likely to consent to concessions made in its behalf.

Farther, it is said that the inclusion of the special sciences makes sociology unwieldy and too large for any one man. Here again we meet the academic influence, urging that the field be divided as it used to be in the old school books, into lessons of approximately equal size for convenience of assimilation. This consideration is not without force, but it must be remembered that the names applied to the sciences have long ago ceased to determine the scope of individual careers. Chemistry is a science vastly larger than the capacity of one man, but the term is appropriately applied to the study of the whole body of phenomena which involve the law of chemical affinity. To have trimmed the word down to the size of a man would have lessened its usefulness and bred confusion. The wiser course has been adopted of using qualifying adjectives. The observer of general laws treats of general chemistry, while organic chemistry, physical chemistry, etc., are fields of special investigation.

For all these reasons I incline to the opinion that sociology will be most profitable as a general term, including the special social sciences as its branches. I believe such an

inclusive use of the term will be forced upon us whether we will or not, as has been the case with biology. As in the latter case, however, the narrower use is admissible and practicable, though "general" sociology will often be found desirable for explicitness, as even Professor Giddings' writings testify. But inclusive or exclusive it must not be forgotten that sociology is more than a group of special sciences, and that the study of fundamentals should be strongly emphasized. This matter is important; the other, it seems to me, is not.

One question remains to be considered which bears slightly on the last. In his recent admirable publication on "The Theory of Sociology," Professor Giddings notes that, "In the study of institutions, more than anywhere else, general (!) sociology has been confounded with the special social sciences." He believes this is due to a desire for "symmetry and completeness." I believe, however, that the symmetry actually attained will hardly justify this conclusion. The social institutions are never equally treated, industry being most of all neglected. The reason is clear. A certain development of the special sciences must accompany or precede the development of general sociology. As a matter of fact these branch sciences have been very unequally developed. Economics has been highly developed, while the family, religion, etc., have been so little studied that they have given their name to no science. Until something is done here generalization is impossible, and for lack of specialists the sociologist has been obliged to do this preliminary work himself. Of course the work is not very thoroughly done, and the resulting mixture (if not confusion) of general with special is not very satisfactory, but it is inevitable. In the academic field this union of non-co-ordinate elements is even more unavoidable. The professor of sociology generally finds others teaching politics and economics on his arrival, but he is expected to teach domestics* himself. This and other like combinations must

* I suggest the term. I am ready to accept a better one.

long continue in most of our institutions. All the force of academic usage will tend to associate these studies with the name, sociology. It is worth considering whether it is better to oppose this tendency, or make use of it to secure the larger inclusion.

I suggest by way of recapitulation:

Sociologists are substantially agreed as to the nature of the task before them, and the limits within which the individual investigator can most wisely confine his efforts. While differing as to the propriety of using the term sociology in an inclusive sense, they differ less in actual usage, and all confess the question unimportant.

It is farther agreed that the practical worker in sociology should distinguish clearly between general principles and details, that the study of either is sufficient for the most ambitious investigator, and that they appeal to temperaments so different that specialization is desirable. At present the study of fundamentals should be emphasized. The scope of the individual career will depend, not on the symmetry of scientific classification, but on ability and temperament and the exigencies of the academic situation.

Finally, the majority of usage, both scientific and popular, seems to require a definition something as follows: Sociology is the science of society. Its field is co-extensive with the operation of the associative principle in human life. The general laws of association form the subject of general sociology, a science distinct but not disconnected from the branch sciences of economics, politics, etc., which rest upon it, though in part developed before it.

I am far from wishing to force my opinion on others. If I am mistaken in interpreting the conclusion reached by the conference I invite correction. But I am at least sure that I speak for all in urging uniformity and a speedy conclusion of this discussion. Any agreement is better than none when only terminology is at stake. To devote whole chapters or even university courses to the discussion of such a topic will

suggest vacuity of substantial thought. It will be in vain for us to insist that sociology has a field of its own and is big with promise, unless promise is followed by speedy fulfillment. It is important to stake out our field with care, but let us get done with our surveying and get at our plowing, for the field is, after all, boundless and most of it common, and the world cares only for our crop.

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